

**Autobiography**

**By**

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.**

My personal philosophy is anchored in the belief that we are the architects of our own destiny, but the materials we use to build that destiny are given to us by our environment and our experiences. I believe in the power of adaptability. Just as I have had to adapt from the slow, rhythmic pace of Kisumu to the fast, demanding lifestyle of Nairobi, and eventually to the disciplined academic climate of Nyeri, I believe that success belongs to those who can thrive in any soil they are planted in. This autobiography is not merely a record of events; it is a testament to resilience, a chronicle of a girl who learned to carry her home within her heart, regardless of where her feet were planted.

In many African cultures, and particularly in my Luo heritage, a name is never just a label. It is an identity, a prophecy, and a marker of time. I carry two names that have significantly shaped how I view myself and how I interact with the world.

My first name, Cheryl, was bestowed upon me by my maternal aunt. In our family, receiving a name from a relative is a bond that ties you irrevocably to them. It signifies love and a wish for the child to embody the grace of the giver. The name itself is of French origin, often translated to mean "Beloved" or "Friend." Growing up, I have always strived to live up to this title to be a beloved friend to my peers, a reliable daughter to my parents, and a person who brings warmth into social spaces. It reminds me daily that I am a product of love and community.

My second name, Achieng, anchors me deeply to my roots. It is a seasonal name, a clock frozen in time. In the Luo language, "Achieng" is given to a girl born when the sun is shining brightly, typically around midday. It represents the sun at its peak unapologetic, bright, and impossible to ignore. I have always felt a spiritual connection to this meaning. Just as the midday sun brings clarity and banishes shadows, I have always sought to bring clarity to confusion, whether through solving a complex coding problem in my IT classes or offering advice to a friend in need. Being an "Achieng" means carrying the warmth of the sun with me, a trait that has served me well during the cold, foggy mornings of Nyeri.

My story began in Kisumu, the great lakeside city. Although I only spent my foundational years there from birth until about the age of six the city left an indelible mark on my spirit. My earliest, hazy memories are painted in the vibrant colors of the Nyanza region: the shimmering waters of Lake Victoria, the humidity that wraps around you like a blanket, and the communal warmth of a society where everyone is a neighbor. These early years in Kisumu grounded me. They gave me a sense of belonging and a connection to my heritage that has remained unshaken, even as I moved further away.

As I transitioned into my school-going years, life took me to Nairobi, the heartbeat of Kenya. Moving to Nairobi was a shift from the serene to the chaotic, from the slow to the supersonic. Nairobi is where I truly grew up. It is the city that taught me "street smarts," ambition, and the hustle. Living in Nairobi exposed me to the diverse melting pot of Kenyan culture. It was here that I learned to navigate complex social structures, developed my love for technology, and began to dream of a career that could merge business with the digital world. Nairobi hardened my resolve and sharpened my focus.

Finally, my pursuit of higher education brought me to Nyeri, specifically to Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DKUT). Nyeri stands in stark contrast to both Kisumu and Nairobi. It is a place of serene hills, biting cold, and serious academic focus. If Kisumu was my cradle and Nairobi was my training ground, Nyeri became my forge. It was here, against the backdrop of Mount Kenya, that I refined my professional skills, battled through complex semesters, and matured into the woman I am today.

I am a sum of these three places: I possess the warmth of Kisumu, the resilience of Nairobi, and the discipline of Nyeri. As I turn the pages of this autobiography, I invite you to walk with me through the specific chapters of this journey from the innocence of childhood games to the complexities of campus life and to see how these diverse experiences have crafted the person known as Cheryl Achieng.

## CHAPTER TWO: ROOTS AND RHYTHMS.

The rocky cradle of my story finds its physical beginning in the rugged, sun-drenched terrains of Kisian. Located just a short distance from the bustling city of Kisumu, Kisian is a place where the landscape commands respect. It is a town characterized by its dramatic rock formations ancient boulders that seem to have been scattered by a giant's hand across the earth. These rocks were not just geographical features; they were the backdrop of my earliest breaths and the silent witnesses to my first steps.

Growing up in Kisian meant living in harmony with nature's raw beauty. The air was always thick with the promise of rain or the heavy, humid heat characteristic of the Lake Victoria basin. Unlike the concrete jungle of Nairobi where I would later spend much of my life, Kisian was open and vast. The ground was hard and rocky, teaching me early on to watch my step, a lesson in mindfulness that has stayed with me. It was a humble beginning, far removed from luxury, but rich in culture and community spirit. The proximity to Kisumu meant we were never too far from civilization, yet Kisian felt like a protected enclave, a rocky cradle that shielded me during my most vulnerable years.

I was born into a humble family, a unit bound together not by material wealth but by deep love and shared resilience. In the hierarchy of siblings, I occupy the fourth position out of five children. Being the "fourth born" is a unique position; you are neither the eldest bearing the weight of responsibility nor the youngest enjoying the spoils of leniency. I was in the middle of the pack, perfectly positioned to observe, learn, and be guided.

Our home was always alive with activity. With five children under one roof, silence was a rare luxury, but loneliness was non-existent. My relationship with my siblings was the cornerstone of my childhood social life. I spent hours playing with my older siblings, trying to keep up with their games and their conversations. They were my first teachers, my first playmates, and my first rivals. We learned to share everything from food to space to attention instilling in me a sense of community and cooperation that I still carry today.

One of my most cherished memories from my early education was the privilege of attending the same primary school as my older brother. In the chaotic ecosystem of a primary school playground, having an older sibling is akin to having a personal bodyguard, and my brother took this role seriously.

He was fiercely protective and deeply caring. I remember him checking on me during breaks, ensuring I had eaten, and defending me from any potential bullies. His presence gave me a sense of security that allowed me to thrive. I walked through the school gates with confidence, knowing that no matter what happened in the classroom or on the field, I had a guardian watching over me. This bond we forged in those early years created a foundation of trust that remains to this day. It taught me the value of family loyalty and the importance of looking out for one another.

While many of my peers in Kisumu and later in school were drawn to the adrenaline of sport .I found myself marching to the beat of a different drum. I was not a "sports person." The dusty fields and competitive races did not call to me. Instead, I found my sanctuary in the creative arts.

I leaned heavily towards music, arts, and drama. I was the child who was happier sketching in a notebook or humming a tune than chasing a ball. The stage felt like home in a way the sports field never did. Participating in drama festivals and music classes allowed me to express emotions and narratives that I couldn't articulate in regular conversation. It was in these creative spaces that I learned the power of storytelling a skill that has surprisingly translated well into my current field of IT and Business, where presenting a compelling narrative is just as important as writing clean code.

No autobiography of a girl from the lakeside would be complete without talking about food. My culinary identity is deeply rooted in my Luo heritage. Growing up, fish was not just a meal; it was a celebration. I developed a deep love for *Tilapia* and, specifically, *Mbuta* (Nile Perch). There is a distinct sweetness to fresh Nile Perch from Lake Victoria that cannot be replicated anywhere else. Accompanied by traditional vegetables like *Osuga* or *Akeyo*, and a side of soft *Ugali*, this was the comfort food that defined my childhood.

However, life has a funny way of expanding your tastes. When I moved to Nyeri to join Dedan Kimathi University, I was introduced to a new culinary staple: the potato, affectionately known as "*Waru*." In Nyanza, potatoes are a delicacy, often expensive and reserved for special stews. In Nyeri, however, they are abundant, affordable, and a daily staple.

To the surprise of my family back home, I developed a profound love for *Waru* during my time in the central highlands. Perhaps it was the biting cold of Nyeri that made a hot plate of potato stew so comforting, or perhaps it was just the novelty of having them in abundance. My favorite meal eventually evolved into a fusion of my two worlds: the Chapati and Chicken of my childhood celebrations, combined with the hearty potatoes of my university years. My palate, much like my life, had become a blend of the lakeside and the mountain.

### **CHAPTER THREE: THE CRUCIBLE OF LEARNING.**

My formal introduction to the world of academia began at Kisian Primary School, a modest institution nestled in the rocky landscapes of my birthplace. For a young child, the transition from the safety of home to the regimented environment of a village school was nothing short of a shock. School in the village was not for the faint-hearted; it was a test of endurance as much as it was a test of intellect.

I attended Kisian for Class One and Two. Looking back, those years are painted in the sepia tones of dust and discipline. The classrooms were simple, the resources were scarce, and the discipline was swift. I remember the mornings being particularly difficult waking up before the sun had fully risen, the air crisp and cold, and preparing for a day that felt impossibly long.

However, my saving grace during this "baptism of fire" was my older brother. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, we attended the same school. In the rough-and-tumble ecosystem of Kisian Primary, where older boys could be rowdy and the environment intimidating, my brother was my anchor. He made the unbearable enduring. Whether it was holding my hand as we navigated the rocky paths to the school gate or checking on me during break time to ensure I hadn't been swallowed up by the crowd, his presence turned a frightening experience into a manageable one. He was the bridge between the comfort of home and the harsh reality of school.

The trajectory of my life shifted dramatically when I moved to Nairobi to join Class Three. I was enrolled at Milimani Primary School, a shift that felt like moving to a different planet. Gone were the dusty, open fields of Kisian; in their place were the concrete structures and the fast-paced energy of the capital city.

Milimani Primary was a different beast altogether. While the facilities were better, the social dynamics were more complex. This was where I truly began to understand the diversity of Kenya. I was no longer just a village girl from Kisian; I was now a student in a cosmopolitan environment. Adjusting to this new rhythm took time. The pace of learning was faster, the competition was fiercer, and the expectations were higher. It was here, from Class Three to Class Eight, that my academic identity began to form.

Academically, I was a student of contradictions. I developed an early and profound love for English and the Sciences. English felt natural to me; I loved the flow of words, the structure of sentences, and the ability to express complex thoughts. Science, on the other hand, fed my curiosity. It explained the why and how of the world why the rain fell, how plants grew, and how the body worked. These subjects were my sanctuary. When I opened a science textbook or wrote an English composition, I felt capable and confident.

On the other side of the spectrum was Kiswahili. To put it mildly, Kiswahili and I were adversaries. While I excelled in English, Kiswahili felt like a mountain I could not climb. The *Sarufi* (grammar) rules seemed to change arbitrarily, and the *Insha* (creative writing) never flowed as easily as my English compositions. It was a source of constant frustration. I dreaded the lessons, often shrinking into my seat hoping the teacher wouldn't call on me. It is ironic now, looking back, that I am required to write a resume in Kiswahili for my Capstone project perhaps the universe's way of telling me that I cannot run from this challenge forever!

The journey through primary school was paved with challenges that went beyond the classroom walls. One of the most enduring memories is the sheer physical exertion of getting to school. Walking to school was not a leisurely stroll; it was a daily trek. I remember the weight of my school bag digging into my shoulders, the sun beating down on our backs in the afternoon, and the sheer exhaustion that would set in before I even opened a book to do homework. That walk taught me grit. It taught me that if you want to get to your destination, you have to keep putting one foot in front of the other, no matter how tired you are.

Then there were the social challenges. Bullies were an unfortunate reality of the primary school ecosystem. Being quiet and leaning more towards the arts than sports sometimes made me a target. Navigating the hallways required a certain level of street smarts—knowing which paths to take and which groups to avoid. It was a harsh lesson in human nature, but it taught me resilience and the importance of standing your ground.

Perhaps the most anxiety-inducing challenge, however, was the issue of school fees. Coming from a humble background, there were times when fees were not cleared on time. I vividly remember the sinking feeling in my stomach during school assemblies when the names of students with fee arrears would be read out. The fear of being sent home was constant. It wasn't just about missing classes; it was the shame and the worry of knowing the burden it placed on my parents.

Underlying all these years was the looming shadow of exams. I did not like exams. The pressure to perform, the anxiety of the exam room, and the judgment associated with ranking were things I despised. I was not a student who thrived on testing; I thrived on learning. However, the system demanded results.

Despite my hatred for Kiswahili and my anxiety around exams, I learned the art of perseverance. I pushed through the subjects I hated, I walked the long miles, and I studied by candlelight when necessary. When I finally sat for my KCPE, it wasn't just a test of knowledge; it was a victory over the bullies, the long treks, and the self-doubt that had plagued me for eight years.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE RETURN AND THE RESILIENCE.**

Adolescence is a turbulent time for anyone, but for me, it was marked by a significant geographical and emotional shift. My transition from primary school to high school was not the triumphant march I had hoped for. In the high-stakes lottery of the Kenyan education system, my KCPE performance did not secure me a spot in the prestigious National Schools of Nairobi or the central regions. I had missed the mark for the "big city" schools I had dreamed of attending.

Consequently, fate and the Ministry of Education decided it was time for me to return to my roots. I was admitted to Nyawara Girls High School, a provincial school deep in the Nyanza region. Leaving Nairobi felt like a regression. I was leaving the paved roads, the streetlights, and the fast-paced convenience of the capital to return to the village life I thought I had left behind in Kisian. It felt like the world was taking me back to square

one, forcing me to trade the comforts of urban life for the rustic reality of the lakeside. I packed my metal box not with excitement, but with a heavy heart, unsure of how the "Nairobi girl" in me would survive the next four years in the village.

To be brutally honest, I hated the initial adjustment to boarding life in Nyanza. It was a culture shock that hit me with the force of a physical blow. Boarding school is difficult enough on its own, but boarding school in the village required a level of grit I wasn't sure I possessed.

The environment demanded that I "toughen up" immediately. Gone were the warm showers and the readily available water of home. In their place were cold early mornings, strictly rationed water, and a routine that seemed designed to break you down before building you up. The food was different, the dialect was different, and the amenities were basic. I had to relearn the art of village survival—how to fetch water, how to hand-wash heavy uniforms in cold water, and how to sleep through the buzz of mosquitoes.

I despised the lack of privacy and the rigid regimentation. Every hour was accounted for, from the pre-dawn preps to the lights-out bell. However, looking back, I realize this environment was a crucible. It burned away the softness that city life had instilled in me. It forced me to be self-reliant. I couldn't run to my parents or my protective older brother every time things got hard. I had to face the cold mornings and the strict matrons on my own. It was a hated experience at the time, but it was the fire that forged my resilience.

Socially, I navigated high school as a paradox. On the surface, I was a quiet girl. I kept to myself, observing the chaotic social hierarchy of a girls' boarding school from a safe distance. I was not the loud ringleader or the center of attention. I preferred the solace of my books and the company of a few close friends.

However, beneath that quiet exterior was a steel backbone. I learned very quickly that in a boarding school, silence can sometimes be mistaken for weakness. When it was necessary when I felt an injustice was being done or when my boundaries were crossed I found my voice. I learned to speak for myself with a clarity and firmness that often surprised people.

This period of adolescence was defined by this internal negotiation: knowing when to be silent and preserve my energy, and knowing when to speak up and defend my space. It was in the dormitories and classrooms of Nyawara Girls that I truly found my agency. I learned that you don't have to be the loudest person in the room to be heard; you just have to be the most convicted.

The climax of this four-year struggle was the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exams. The atmosphere in Form Four is always thick with anxiety, a collective fear that hangs over the school like a fog. For me, the stakes felt incredibly high. I had already "failed" to get into a National School once; I was terrified of disappointing my parents and myself a second time.

The exam period was a blur of revision papers, sleepless nights, and intense prayer. I wasn't fighting for a grade; I was fighting for my future. I knew that a good grade was my ticket out of the village and back to the modern world I missed.

When the results were finally released, the relief was overwhelming. I had managed to pass. I hadn't just survived the village boarding life; I had conquered it. The ultimate validation came in the form of an admission letter to Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DKUT). It was a moment of pure vindication. I had entered Nyawara Girls as a disappointed child who felt sent away, but I was leaving as a qualified young woman headed for a university named after a freedom fighter.

Getting called to Kimathi was symbolic. It meant moving from the lowlands of Nyanza to the highlands of Nyeri. It meant I had earned my place in higher education. The hardships of the cold showers, the strict routines, and the tough village life had paid off. I was ready for the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: THE HIGHLAND FORGE (UNI YEARS).**

The journey to Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DKUT) felt like an ascent in more ways than one. Geographically, I was moving to the central highlands, a place where the air was thinner, crisper, and significantly colder than the lakeside warmth I was used to. Emotionally, I was climbing to a new level of independence.

Admission day was a kaleidoscope of chaos. The university gates were flooded with thousands of fresh faces, confused parents, and aggressive hawkers selling buckets and mattresses. The atmosphere was thick with anxiety and excitement. Unlike many of my peers who were escorted by their parents, my arrival was slightly different. My parents did not accompany me that day; instead, I was flanked by my seasoned veterans my older brother and sister.

Having siblings who were already navigating the university landscape was a blessing I cannot overstate. While other first-years looked lost, clutching their admission letters like lifelines, my siblings moved with the confidence of generals on a battlefield. They knew exactly which lines to join, which forms to sign first, and how to navigate the bureaucratic maze of registration. They were my compass in the chaos. Their presence made a daunting day manageable, bridging the gap between my nervous anticipation and the reality of becoming a university student.

Choosing a career path is rarely a straight line; for me, it was a negotiation between two competing passions. On one hand, I had a deep, innate love for computers. The logic of code, the limitless potential of software, and the digital world fascinated me. On the other hand, the world of business intrigued me the dynamics of trade, management, and the psychology of the market sounded "good" to my ambitious ears.

I stood at a crossroads, unsure of which path to commit to. Choosing pure Computer Science felt like abandoning my business interests, while choosing Commerce felt like leaving my technical curiosity behind. The solution came in the form of a hybrid: Bachelor of Science in Business and Information Technology (BBIT). It was the perfect marriage of my two worlds. BBIT promised to equip me with the technical skills to build systems and the business acumen to manage them. It was a pragmatic choice, reflecting my desire to be a versatile professional in a digital economy.

University life is as much about social survival as it is about academic success. For a natural introvert like me, the initial weeks were a struggle. The sheer volume of new people students from every corner of Kenya was overwhelming. I found it difficult to initiate conversations or break into established cliques. I spent many early evenings in my room, finding comfort in solitude rather than braving the social scene.

However, as the days turned into weeks, the ice began to thaw. I realized that university is a place where you can reinvent yourself. I slowly began to open up, and to my surprise, I found a circle of friends who accepted my quiet nature while encouraging me to explore.

This exploration led me to the vibrant nightlife of Nyeri. The contrast between the quiet, foggy days and the electric energy of the university nights was intoxicating. I learned to enjoy the music, the dance, and the freedom that comes with young adulthood. Admittedly, finding the balance was a challenge. There were times when the allure of the social scene threatened to overshadow the reason I was there. It was a precarious juggling act—balancing the "Introvert" who needed rest, the "Student" who needed to study, and the "Young Adult" who wanted to have fun. Eventually, I found my footing, learning that one could enjoy the night and still conquer the morning lectures.

To further anchor myself in the university community, I sought out clubs that resonated with my diverse interests. I found a home in IAESTE (The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience). Joining the marketing wing of IAESTE was an eye-opener. It forced me out of my shell, requiring me to communicate value, organize events, and interact with international standards. It was practical training for the business side of my degree.

On the sporting front, I took a detour from the mainstream and joined the Woodball team. Woodball is a unique sport a blend of golf and croquet that requires precision and patience rather than just brute strength. It was perfect for me. It wasn't about running the fastest; it was about strategy and focus. These clubs became my sanctuary, places where I could decompress and express parts of my personality that lectures couldn't touch.

However, my journey through DKUT was not a smooth, uninterrupted line. The shadow of financial constraint, which had hovered during my primary years, returned with a vengeance. School fees became a significant hurdle.

There came a painful point where the financial gap was too wide to bridge immediately. While my friends and classmates moved forward to the next semester, I was forced to pause. I had to step back and wait for a year. It was a devastating blow to my morale. Watching my original cohort progress while I remained stagnant was one of the hardest psychological battles I have fought. I felt left behind, out of sync with my timeline.

But life is not a race; it is a journey. After a year of waiting—a year that tested my patience and my resolve—I was able to return. I rejoined the university, this time integrating with the 2022 cohort. It was a humbling experience to start again with a new group, but it taught me resilience. I learned that a delay is not a denial. Rejoining with the class of 2022 gave me a second wind, a renewed focus, and a deeper appreciation for the education I had almost lost. I was back, not just as a student, but as a survivor of circumstance.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CHALLENGES.**

It is often said that money is not everything, but in the context of higher education, it is the fuel that keeps the engine running. My most significant challenge during my time at Dedan Kimathi University was not an academic concept I couldn't grasp or a complex code I couldn't crack; it was the harsh reality of financial constraints.

There came a point in my academic journey where the resources simply ran dry. Despite the best efforts of my guardians, the economic strain became too heavy to sustain the continuous flow of tuition and living expenses. It was a moment of reckoning. I remember the sinking feeling of realizing that while my mind was ready to learn, my pocket was unable to support that ambition. I was faced with a difficult choice: accumulate insurmountable debt and study in anxiety, or take a strategic pause to regroup. I chose the latter.

Taking a break from university was one of the hardest decisions I have ever had to make. It felt like stepping off a moving train. I watched my friends, my roommates, and my cohort continue their journey to the next semester, while I remained stationary. The emotional weight of "being left behind" was heavy. It felt like stagnation, a pause button pressed on my dreams while the rest of the world played on fast forward.

However, I refused to let this pause become a period of idleness. I knew that sitting at home waiting for a miracle would only increase my anxiety and the pressure on my guardians. I decided to step into the arena of the workforce. I moved back to Nairobi, the city of possibilities, and took up a job in Sales.

If the university was a place of theoretical learning, the streets of Nairobi were a school of hard knocks. Working in sales is not for the faint-hearted. It requires a thick skin, an abundance of patience, and the ability to handle rejection with a smile. My daily routine shifted from attending lectures to meeting targets. I walked the streets, pitched products to skeptical customers, and learned the art of persuasion.

This period was transformative. It was physically exhausting and often emotionally draining to face rejection after rejection. Yet, it was exactly what I needed. It gave me a "foothing" in the real world. I was no longer just a student dependent on others; I was earning, contributing, and alleviating the burden on my family. That sales job taught me the value of money in a way no textbook could. It taught me that every shilling is a product of sweat and strategy. It also honed my communication skills—skills that are now invaluable in my Business and IT career. I learned to speak for myself, to negotiate, and to persist even when the door was slammed in my face.

Beyond the financial struggle, the emotional toll of this period was significant. My life became a series of geographical and psychological shifts. I was constantly switching environments: from the rocky stability of Kisumu to the academic cold of Nyeri, then to the fast-paced hustle of Nairobi, and eventually back to Nyeri.

Every move required a reset. I had to adapt to new sleeping arrangements, new social circles, and new daily routines constantly. This transient lifestyle can be disorienting. There were moments of deep loneliness and confusion, where I felt like a nomad without a permanent home. I had to learn to be a chameleon—adapting to the village, the city, and the campus effortlessly.

I coped by anchoring myself in faith. I am not a person who wears religion on my sleeve, but in those quiet moments of uncertainty, I found solace in prayer. I trusted that God had a plan for me, that this detour was not a dead end but a different route to the same destination. That spiritual grounding kept me sane when the physical world around me was in constant flux.

In the midst of these financial and emotional storms, I hold onto a profound sense of gratitude for one specific blessing: my health. It is easy to overlook the value of a healthy body until it is threatened. throughout the stress of fee arrears, the fatigue of the sales job, and the anxiety of the gap year, I never once suffered from a serious health condition.

This was my silent advantage. Because I was healthy, I could walk the long distances required by my sales job. Because I was strong, I could endure the cold of Nyeri and the heat of Nairobi. I saw others who had the money for fees but were held back by illness, and it gave me a perspective of gratitude. I realized that while my wallet might have been empty at times, my body was full of vitality.

Overcoming the fee crisis was not a singular event; it was a process. It took patience to wait for my guardians to gather the funds. It took humility to step back and join the 2022 cohort. It took grit to work a sales job while my peers studied. But I did it. I persevered. I returned to DKUT not just with a receipt for my fees, but with a resume of life experiences that made me a more determined and mature student.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE LENS AND THE LAWN.

My relationship with the arts has always been the golden thread running through the tapestry of my life. In my younger years, as I mentioned, this manifested as a love for music and drama—being on stage, memorizing lines, and embodying characters. However, as I transitioned into university life at Dedan Kimathi, the way I engaged with art evolved.

While I did not pursue drama actively on campus in terms of acting, I remained a devoted student of the craft. I became an avid consumer of cinema and theatre, watching performances not just for entertainment, but with a critical eye. I found myself analyzing lighting, storytelling techniques, and character arcs. This shift from "actor" to "observer" was not a withdrawal; it was a maturation. It allowed me to appreciate the nuances of visual storytelling, a skill that would surprisingly become the cornerstone of my new role in the sporting world.

When I joined the university, I was looking for a community that was different from the high-energy, high-contact sports I had seen in high school. I found my answer in Woodball. For the uninitiated, Woodball is a sport that requires immense focus, strategy, and precision. It is played on grass with a mallet and a wooden ball, often described as a blend of golf and croquet.

I didn't just join the team; I immersed myself in it. I became a very active member, attending training sessions and traveling for games. However, my most significant contribution to the Woodball team was not just my swing, but my vision. I naturally gravitated towards a unique leadership role: The Team Media Lead.

Combining my BBIT technical skills with my artistic passion, I took up the mantle of the team's official Camera Woman and Video Editor. This role became my new "drama stage." Instead of acting, I was now capturing the action.

Being behind the lens gave me a sense of purpose. I was responsible for documenting our victories, our training struggles, and the camaraderie of the team. I spent hours editing footage, cutting clips to music, and creating highlight reels that the team could share. This was where my love for "Arts and Moves" found a practical application. Video editing is, after all, a modern form of art—it requires rhythm, color grading, and storytelling. It turned a hobby into a technical skill, allowing me to serve my team while refining the very design skills I hope to use in my future career.

My artistic expression also found a home in the corporate sphere through the Marketing Club and IAESTE (International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience). Joining these clubs was a strategic move to balance my introverted nature with the need for professional networking.

In the Marketing Club, I learned that business is also an art form. Persuading a customer, designing a campaign, or pitching an idea requires the same creativity as painting a picture. In IAESTE, I was exposed to global standards of student exchange and leadership. These experiences taught me that creativity is not limited to a canvas or a stage; it is a vital tool in the boardroom. Whether I was editing a Woodball video or

designing a flyer for a club event, I was consistently weaving my passion for design into my daily life.

## CHAPTER NINE: THE BLUEPRINT OF TOMORROW.

As I stand on the precipice of graduation, gazing into the horizon of the next decade, my professional compass points towards the intersection of technology and human experience. My primary ambition is to secure a role at Safaricom, the telecommunications giant that has revolutionized the Kenyan economy. Working at Safaricom represents the pinnacle of tech impact in our region. I want to be part of an ecosystem that keeps Kenya connected, using my background in Business and IT to solve large-scale problems.

However, my aspirations are not limited to a single corporate entity. My heart beats for UI/UX Design (User Interface and User Experience). Drawing from my experience in graphic design and video editing, I want to work as a specialized designer, preferably in a remote setting. The world has become a global village, and I envision myself working with diverse international brands, helping them bring their abstract ideas to life through intuitive and beautiful digital interfaces. I want to be the bridge between complex code and the human user, ensuring that technology is not just functional, but delightful to use.

When I close my eyes and picture myself in five to ten years, I see a woman of substance and stability. I see Cheryl Achieng not just as a graduate, but as a multifaceted pillar of society.

First and foremost, I aspire to be a mother to build a family rooted in the same love and resilience that my parents instilled

in me. I want to create a home that is a sanctuary. Parallel to this, I see myself as a well established business woman. My degree is not just for employment; it is for deployment. I intend to run my own design consultancy, managing clients and projects with the discipline I learned in Nyeri.

Financial freedom is a key pillar of my vision. I plan to become a landowner and landlord. In Kenya, land is more than an asset; it is a legacy. Owning property and generating passive income through real estate will give me the security to pursue my creative passions without the fear of financial instability that plagued my university years. I want to stand on my own ground literally and metaphorically.

Beyond my personal success, I am driven by a desire to leave a mark on my country. I want to create a blueprint for girls like me girls from places like Kisian and Nyawara who may not have gone to National Schools, who may have struggled with school fees, or who felt too quiet for a loud world.

I want to demonstrate that you can be an introvert and still be a leader. You can start in the village and end up designing for global brands. You can take a gap year due to lack of funds and still finish the race strong. My impact will not just be in the apps I design or the businesses I build, but in the story I tell. I want my life to be a roadmap that says: "It is possible. You can do it too."

## CHAPTER TEN: THE FINAL REFLECTION.

As I pen the final words of this autobiography, I am overcome with a profound sense of completeness. This document is more

than just an assignment for a Capstone project; it is a mirror reflecting the fragmented pieces of my life that have finally come together to form a whole picture.

From the rocky cradle of Kisian to the bustling streets of Nairobi, and finally to the misty hills of Dedan Kimathi University, every environment has left its fingerprint on my soul. I came to Kimathi as a young, uncertain girl, intimidated by the cold and the crowds. I leave as a resilient woman, a video editor, a budding UI/UX designer, and a survivor of financial adversity. I am grateful for the journey, for the "fee arrears" that taught me patience, and for the "sales jobs" that taught me grit.

One of the greatest gifts this university gave me was the people. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to meet such a diverse group of individuals. I have interacted with brilliant minds from every county in Kenya, debated with future engineers, and played Woodball with future leaders. These interactions shattered the bubble of my introversion. They taught me that the world is vast and that everyone has a story worth listening to. The friends I made here are not just classmates; they are the network that will support me as I build my career.

No story is written in isolation. I owe a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid. First, to God, the Sustainer who kept me healthy when I had nothing else, and who guided my steps during the uncertain months of my gap year.

To my family my parents who sacrificed everything to educate five children, and my older siblings who walked ahead of me,

holding the torch so I wouldn't stumble in the dark. You are my rock.

And finally, to my good friends. To those who shared their notes when I missed classes, who shared their meals when I was broke, and who encouraged me when I felt like giving up. You are the family I chose.

This is not the end of my story; it is merely the end of the first volume. The next chapter belongs to the future to Safaricom, to design, to motherhood, and to the land I will one day call my own.